

Minutes
Council of Economic Advisors
Wednesday, August 5, 2020 9:00 a.m.
Zoom Meeting ID 872-6836-0733
Approved September 9, 2020

Members Present: Adam Block, Tina Burgos, Glen Cammarano, Bill Day, Maurice Handel, Adam Meixner, Rick Putprush, Matthew Talcoff, Michael Wilcox

Members Absent: Stuart Agler Anne Marie Dowd, Virginia Fleisher, Robert Hentschel, David Montgomery, Ted Owens

Others Present: Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development; Tim McDonald, Director of Public Health; Ted Doyle and Lee Bloom of LCB Senior Living; Louise Giannakis, Goulston and Storrs; Mark Fougere, Fougere Planning & Development

Adam Block, Chair, opened the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

1. Minutes of June 15, 2020

Mr. Cammarano moved to adopt the minutes of June 15, 2020. Mr. Meixner seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Update on COVID-19 Impact - Issues and Concerns on Local Businesses

Mr. McDonald gave an update on the new travel restrictions for Massachusetts residents and the required 14 day quarantine upon return from a high-risk area. There has been a small uptick in number of positive coronavirus cases in the last two weeks and most have been a result of people traveling to high risk destinations. The Needham Health Dept. gets 2-3 complaints a day about people not following mask requirements including restaurant workers and tenants in multi-unit office buildings. The Health Dept. follows up on the complaints but it is challenging when they don't personally observe the complaints themselves. One of the biggest challenges Needham is facing is back-to-school with the public and private schools and colleges working to determine the best strategy for keeping students and staff safe.

Mr. McDonald shared that another area of concern to local businesses is communicating to the public why an owner or employee of the business is not wearing a mask because of medical reasons. He noted that the City of Brookline had effective signage to address this issue and that Needham has replicated with their permission. The messaging includes information on how the business can accommodate customers who may be uncomfortable conducting business with someone who is not wearing a mask including curbside pickup or home delivery so that you don't have to come into the business itself. The Health Dept. distributed electronic copies to local businesses and have hard copies available as well. Mr. McDonald offered that the Health Dept. is available to help with other signage that business owners may need to address any COVID-19 related health concerns or encourage compliance. Ms. Burgos suggested that talking points for businesses would be very helpful to address issues such as confronting customers who

are not in compliance with mask wearing, use of hand sanitizer or managing the number of customers in retail space at one time.

Mr. Wilcox and Mr. Meixner spoke to the impact COVID-19 has had on commercial office rentals. More prospective tenants are interested in space with hard walls to separate employees over open space for cubicles. Employee capacity in office buildings continues to be much lower as a result of people working from home. Mr. McDonald said it is up to employers to determine spacing for employees and that the Health Dept. is not regulating this, however, employees who observe what they feel to be unsafe conditions can file a complaint with the Mass. Dept. of Labor Standards.

3. Update from Town Planner

- a. **Economic Development Manager** – The Town has hired Amy Haelsen to serve in this capacity. She will begin on August 24th.
 - b. **Issuance of Permits** – No new permits have been issued since the CEA last convened in July.
 - c. **Commercial Activity** – Boston Children’s Hospital has contacted the Planning Dept. They are moving forward with the permitting process and Ms. Newman is planning a Development Review Team meeting for later in the month to review their initial permitting package. The proposed rezoning of Avery Square for the former Carter’s building will be discussed later in the CEA meeting by representatives of the developer. This will be voted on at the October 4th Town Meeting.
4. **LCB Senior Living Presentation** – Mr. Doyle shared that the company, located in Norwood, has over 25 years of experience developing senior housing in New England and along the East coast. They developed and managed Newton Senior Living in Wells Park in the 1990’s and 2000’s and specialize in building assisted, independent and memory care living facilities. They are proposing the Carter’s Mill site for 72 apartments for independent living, 55 apartments for assisted living, and 28 apartments for memory care living as well as amenities including an indoor swimming pool, an indoor movie theatre, common areas including dining rooms, and a roof deck. The building will be completely refurbished and relandscaped. Ten additional apartments will be built on the roof top but will not be visible from Highland Ave. Welltower is the current owner of the Carter’s building and a partner in this project.

Mark Fougere introduced findings from his fiscal impact study of the project which included review of the potential revenue to the town from this project as well as potential impacts to specific departments and then assign a cost to those impacts. Income generated from this project will include property taxes, personal property taxes from the assets within the buildings, and excise taxes from residents with vehicles. The total annual revenue generated by this development will be \$540,000. The town departments which will be directly impacted by this new complex will be police, fire, and health. The total impact cost will amount to \$162,000 annually which results in a net positive of \$380,000 annually to the town.

Mr. Block shared that the public hearing for this project will be held by the Planning Board on August 11th at which time the public can ask questions. He conducted a vote of the

Council members. Mr. Cammarano made a motion to support the redevelopment of the Carter's building at 100 West Street by LCB. Mr. Meixner seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:54 am.